

30 September 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Intelligence)

SUBJECT : Inspector General's Recommendations Concerning
Current Intelligence

1. What I have to say below in no way reflects criticism of OCI. Their publications are first-class and I think they are doing an excellent job at what they are supposed to be doing under our current system of operations. I have been thinking about the problem of current intelligence support for sometime, however, and I have had a good chance during the past months to see something of how the system operates from the policy side of the US Government.

2. The I.G.'s paper has some very interesting ideas in it, and I would agree that the time is right for us to consider some radically different ways of going about the current intelligence business. In one sense what we have is a classic example of the difference between formal organization and informal organization. Although in theory the latest word on important matters affecting US security gets to top policy-making officials by means of the OCI publications, the Watch Committee Report, and so forth, in actual practice I think that we will find that key personnel throughout the government actually get their information from three sources:

a. Wire Service - Most officials have at least one news ticker someplace in the background and most officials either receive first information of a great many significant events from this source or by telephone from somebody else who has a new ticker.

b. Home Agency Telegrams - Telegram distribution in the State Department seems to be very efficient in the top levels, and for a great many important world events, officials in the State Department have received the information through State Department cables and acted on it long before the OCI publications reach them. In many cases officials in the Pentagon and White House have been cut in by telephone or personal visit and are also well-aware of the event before our publications get to them. In the case of the Defense Department, attache cables and operational messages bring in a constant flow of information and the White House and State Department are often cut-in informally in advance of our publications.

c. Grapevine - If something is really "hot", word seems to get around to a great many people very rapidly in spite of the difficulty which security creates for this sort of communication.

3. Although my personal observation in this matter is limited, what personal experience I have had indicates that the current intelligence publications in their present form are primarily useful on those matters which are indirectly of interest to a given activity. In other words, if the matter is really important to your specific job, you will already have heard about it, before the publication comes out. On the other hand, if it is something that you should know to have a complete picture but does not directly involve a major issue of concern to you as a policy maker, you may very well learn of it for the first time through the current intelligence publications. In this sense, the weekly publications are particularly useful since they not only contain facts but a bit more thoughtful analysis than that which can normally be obtained through the informal channels by which information usually moves.

4. There are, of course, some items in the special intelligence field or other highly sensitive sources that are not reflected in wire services or in telegrams from one of the action departments. This is a relatively small portion of the total, however, and even for these the grapevine sometimes works remarkably well. For example, a good State Department Liaison Officer may learn of an item at NSA hours or days before it is published and may have briefed the appropriate action officer in the State Department long before the item appears in the Diplomatic Summary or in one of the OCI publications.

5. It seems to me that about the only way that we can really compete in this situation is to turn our resources into something approaching a classified wire service, giving a 24-hour service with events dictating the transmission of information rather than having our product "spooned" out in accordance with the difficulties and deadlines of a publication program. This would make our service immediately available to all important consumers at all times. Many of them, and all of them at sometimes, may feel that they do not need such service at night or on week-ends and holidays, but most of them at sometime or other in their jobs will need such service on a 24-hour basis, and we will have it there for them. In other words, we should provide the service and let the consumer use or reject it in accordance with his job, but let us not force the consumer to make his demands coincide with our publications schedule.

6. One way in which we might organize ourselves to do this current intelligence operation would be to establish a secure teletype system with outlets at such key points as the White House,

State Department, JCS, the intelligence agencies, and so forth, with each outlet manned by an alert intelligence officer. Items would be put on the wire as soon as they had gone through the customary analysis and approval in OCI. There would thus be a constant stream of important items disseminated by wire instead of the daily package of paper which would flow through the slower mail channels inside the consumer offices. It would also eliminate the time now used in producing letter-perfect copy for reproduction in our publications. It would be the duty of the intelligence officer manning the outlet to know the organization he is servicing and bring significant items to the attention of interested action personnel as soon as they are received, or as soon as his customers want to be informed on a particular subject. He would also be available to receive and transmit to CIA questions which might come up about the item among the consumers. This would tend to make current intelligence operation a live part of the process of policy formulation rather than a passive service as it is today. The center of the wire system at CIA would act as a relay point for those questions from consumers which might better be answered by a third agency or department.

7. The worst features of the proposed system are its cost and trouble of setting it up. I think these difficulties are minor, however, when compared with the increased speed, efficiency, and utility which the whole current intelligence process could achieve. The most important point, however, is that it will probably take something as drastic as this proposed scheme to make any significant improvement over the present system, which is already about as efficient as it is possible to be when dealing in terms of a series of regular publications.

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